

10 Things to Remember When Working With Students with Autism

WCYD= What can you do

1. Autism is not a psychological or behavior disorder. It is neurobiological like epilepsy.
WCYD-Be aware these students cannot turn their behavior off and on

2. Students with Autism will have problems with abstract thinking, motor and coordination skills, and recognizing and coping with emotions.

WCYD- What are your student's strengths? How can you modify or change an assignment in order to use those strengths (typing instead of writing an assignment)

3. Many students with Autism are plagued with atypical sensitivity to sensory input. (painful responses to sound, lighting, touch, smells, tastes, and textures).

WCYD- know if your student has any of these sensitivities and find ways to eliminate or subdue them if possible.

4. Students with Autism lack the skill which allows us to recognize other people's feelings, thoughts, beliefs, and intentions. They have no innate ability to respond to another person accordingly.

WCYD- Provide role models and be free with labeling emotions as they occur.
"I am frustrated because no one is listening"

5. Students with Autism have deficits in executive functioning. The ability to plan, organize tasks, monitor one's own performance, inhibit inappropriate responses, utilize feedback, and suppress distracting stimuli.

WCYD- plan/ organize- visual schedules
Monitor self- visual thermometers
Responses- give replacement behavior
Stimuli- head phones, desk carrel, etc.

6. While many of the students with Autism can remember the minutest details about a subject that interests them, they often fail to understand abstract concepts or metaphors.

WCYD- keep language simple and free from clichés.
"pants on fire"

7. Students with Autism have trouble identifying, quantifying, expressing, and controlling their emotions. Tantrums are not a result of a learned behavior they are the result of a sensory/neurological breakdown. These tantrums are similar to a seizure you would see in an epileptic.

WCYD- Be clear about what your expectations are. Learn to read your student's behavior which indicates he is becoming over stimulated or anxious. (shoes, fidgeting, rocking, moaning)

8. The time it takes for students with Autism to process only verbal information is 4 minutes. That's right. 4 minutes. The wonderful curriculum that is language rich and teaching our students to think, are very difficult for our students with Autism.

WCYD- Provide as many visual supports as possible. Include any written explanations to your students with autism. Realize some behavior they engage in during lecture time is a clue they are not processing what you say and may need a break. Wait,wait,wait.

9. Behavior- When trying to modify behavior, it is imperative to tell the student what they need to do not just what they did wrong. They have no idea how to "fix it".

WCYD- When correcting the student do it with what they should have done. "When you come down the hall next time I need you to walk, not run.", "When you get frustrated with the work, use your free pass to help, don't bang your head on your desk."

10. Remember these students spend most of their lives feeling like a red tulip in a field of yellow ones. "

WCYD- Accept their idiosyncrasies as an explanation and not an excuse. "If I had three wishes, I'd wish three times to be someone else. Someone who did good in school."